

stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

The Massacre of the Infants

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

¹⁸ *"A voice was heard in Ramah,
sobbing and loud lamentation;
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she would not be consoled,
since they were no more."*

The Return from Egypt

¹⁹When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰*and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²*But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. ²³*He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean."

II: THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM

The Preaching of John the Baptist

³ ¹*In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea ²*[and] saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" ³*It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said:

"A voice of one crying out in the desert,
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.'"

⁴*John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him ⁶*and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

⁷*When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood

of God, will similarly be called out of that land in a new exodus. The father-son relationship between God and the nation is set in a higher key. Here the son is not a group adopted as "son of God," but the child who, as conceived by the holy Spirit, stands in unique relation to God. He is son of David and of Abraham, of Mary and of Joseph, but, above all, of God.

², ¹⁸: Jer 31, 15 portrays Rachel, wife of the patriarch Jacob, weeping for her children taken into exile at the time of the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom (722–21 B.C.). Bethlehem was traditionally identified with Ephrath, the place near which Rachel was buried (see Gn 35, 19; 48, 7), and the mourning of Rachel is here applied to her lost children of a later age. *Ramah*: about six miles north of Jerusalem. The lamentation of Rachel is so great as to be heard at a far distance.

², ²⁰: *For those who sought the child's life are dead*: Moses, who had fled from Egypt because the Pharaoh sought to kill him (see Ex 2, 15), was told to return there, "for all the men who sought your life are dead" (Ex 4, 19).

², ²²: With the agreement of the emperor Augustus, Archelaus received half of his father's kingdom, including Judea, after Herod's death. He had the title "ethnarch" (i.e., "ruler of a nation") and reigned from 4 B.C. to A.D. 6.

², ²³: *Nazareth . . . he shall be called a Nazorean*: the tradition of Jesus' residence in Nazareth was firmly established, and Matthew sees it as being in accordance with the foreannounced plan of God. The town of Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament, and no such prophecy can be found there. The vague expression "through the prophets" may be due to Matthew's seeing a connection between Nazareth and certain texts in which there are words with a remote similarity to the name of that town. Some such Old Testament texts are Is 11, 1 where the Davidic king of the future is called "a bud" (*nēser*) that shall blossom from the roots of Jesse, and Jgs 13, 5, 7 where Samson, the future deliverer of Israel from the Philistines, is called one who shall be consecrated (a *nāzīr*) to God.

³, ^{1–12}: Here Matthew takes up the order of Jesus' ministry found in the gospel of Mark, beginning with the preparatory preaching of John the Baptist.

³, ¹: Unlike Luke, Matthew says nothing of the Baptist's origins and does not make him a relative of Jesus. *The desert of Judea*: the barren region west of the Dead Sea extending up the Jordan valley.

³, ²: *Repent*: the Baptist calls for a change of heart and conduct, a turning of one's life from rebellion to obedience toward God. *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*: "heaven" (literally, "the heavens") is a substitute for the name "God" that was avoided by devout Jews of the time out of reverence. The expression "the kingdom of heaven" occurs only in the gospel of Matthew. It means the effective rule of God over his people. In its fullness it includes not only human obedience to God's word, but the triumph of God over physical evils, supremely over death. In the expectation found in Jewish apocalyptic, the kingdom was to be ushered in by a judgment in which sinners would be condemned and perish, an expectation shared by the Baptist. This was modified in Christian understanding where the kingdom was seen as being established in stages, culminating with the parousia of Jesus.

³, ³: See the note on Jn 1, 23.

³, ⁴: The clothing of John recalls the austere dress of the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 1, 8). The expectation of the return of Elijah from heaven to prepare Israel for the final manifestation of God's kingdom was widespread, and according to Matthew this expectation was fulfilled in the Baptist's ministry (11, 14; 17, 11–13).

³, ⁶: Ritual washing was practiced by various groups in Palestine between 150 B.C. and A.D. 250. John's baptism may have been related to the purificatory washings of the Essenes at Qumran.

³, ⁷: *Pharisees and Sadducees*: the former were marked by devotion to the law, written and oral, and the scribes, experts in the law, belonged predominantly to this group. The Sadducees were the priestly aristocratic party, centered in Jerusalem. They accepted as scripture only the first five books of the Old Testament, followed only the letter of the law, rejected the oral legal traditions, and were opposed to teachings not found in the Pentateuch, such as the resurrection of the dead. Matthew links both of these groups together as enemies of Jesus (16, 1.6.11.12; cf Mk 8, 11–13.15). The threatening words that follow are addressed to them rather than to "the crowds

q Jer 31, 15.

r Ex 4, 19.

s 13, 54; Mk 1, 9; Lk 2, 39;

4, 34; Jn 19, 19.

t Mk 1, 2–8; Lk 3, 2–17.

u 4, 17; 10, 7.

v Is 40, 3.

w 11, 7–8; 2 Kgs 1, 8; Zec

13, 4.

x 12, 34; 23, 33; Is 59, 5.

of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹^z*I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I.

I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. ^{12a}*His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

^{13b}*Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴*John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" ¹⁵Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. ^{16c}*After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. ^{17d}*And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

The Temptation of Jesus

^{1e}*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ²*He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." ^{4g}*He said in reply, "It is written:

'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'

⁵*Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, ^{6h}and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

'He will command his angels concerning you' and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'

⁷Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" ⁸Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, ⁹*and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." ¹⁰At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written:

'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'

¹¹Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

^{12k}*When he heard that John had been arrested, he

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| y Jn 8, 33-39; Rom 9, 7-8; | Ps 2, 7; Is 42, 1. |
| Gal 4, 21-31. | e Mk 1, 12-13; Lk 4, 1-13. |
| z Jn 1, 26-27.33; Acts 1, 5. | f Ex 24, 18; Dt 8, 2. |
| a 13, 30; Is 41, 16; Jer 15, | g Dt 8, 3. |
| 7. | h Ps 91, 11-12. |
| b Mk 1, 9-11; Lk 3, 21-22; | i Dt 6, 16. |
| Jn 1, 31-34. | j 16, 23; Dt 6, 13. |
| c Is 42, 1. | k Mk 1, 14-15; Lk 4, 14.31. |
| d 12, 18; 17, 5; Gn 22, 2; | |

as in Lk 3, 7. *The coming wrath*: the judgment that will bring about the destruction of unrepentant sinners.

3, 11: *Baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire*: the water baptism of John will be followed by an "immersion" of the repentant in the cleansing power of the Spirit of God, and of the unrepentant in the destroying power of God's judgment. However, some see *the holy Spirit and fire* as synonymous, and the effect of this "baptism" as either purification or destruction. See the note on Lk 3, 16.

3, 12: The discrimination between the good and the bad is compared to the procedure by which a farmer separates wheat and chaff. The *winnowing fan* was a forklike shovel with which the threshed wheat was thrown into the air. The kernels fell to the ground; the light chaff, blown off by the wind, was gathered and burned up.

3, 13-17: The baptism of Jesus is the occasion on which he is equipped for his ministry by the holy Spirit and proclaimed to be the Son of God.

3, 14-15: This dialogue, peculiar to Matthew, reveals John's awareness of Jesus' superiority to him as the mightier one who is coming and who will baptize with the holy Spirit (11). His reluctance to admit Jesus among the sinners whom he is baptizing with water is overcome by Jesus' response. *To fulfill all righteousness*: in this gospel to fulfill usually refers to fulfillment of prophecy, and *righteousness* to moral conduct in conformity with God's will. Here, however, as in 5, 6 and 6, 33, *righteousness* seems to mean the saving activity of God. *To fulfill all righteousness* is to submit to the plan of God for the salvation of the human race. This involves Jesus' identification with sinners; hence the propriety of his accepting John's baptism.

3, 16: *The Spirit . . . coming upon him*: cf Is 42, 1.

3, 17: *This is my beloved Son*: the Marcan address to Jesus (Mk 1, 11) is changed into a proclamation. The Father's voice speaks in terms that reflect Is 42, 1, Ps 2, 7, and Gn 22, 2.

4, 1-11: Jesus, proclaimed Son of God at his baptism, is subjected to a triple temptation. Obedience to the Father is a characteristic of true sonship, and Jesus is tempted by the devil to rebel against God, overtly in the third case, more subtly in the first two. Each refusal of Jesus is expressed in language taken from the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt 8, 3; 6, 13.16). The testings of Jesus resemble those of Israel during the wandering in the desert and later in Canaan, and the victory of Jesus, the true Israel and the true Son, contrasts with the failure of the ancient and disobedient "son," the old Israel. In the temptation account Matthew is almost identical with Luke; both seem to have drawn upon the same source.

4, 2: *Forty days and forty nights*: the same time as that during which Moses remained on Sinai (Ex 24, 18). The time reference, however, seems primarily intended to recall the forty years during which Israel was tempted in the desert (Dt 8, 2).

4, 4: Cf Dt 8, 3. Jesus refuses to use his power for his own benefit and accepts whatever God wills.

4, 5-7: The devil supports his proposal by an appeal to the scriptures, Ps 91, 11a.12. Unlike Israel (Dt 6, 16), Jesus refuses to "test" God by demanding from him an extraordinary show of power.

4, 9: The worship of Satan to which Jesus is tempted is probably intended to recall Israel's worship of false gods. His refusal is expressed in the words of Dt 6, 13.

4, 12-17: Isaiah's prophecy of the light rising upon Zebulun and Naphtali (Is 8, 23-9, 1) is fulfilled in Jesus' residence at Capernaum. The territory of these two tribes was the first to be devastated (733-32 B.C.) at the time of the Assyrian invasion. In order to accommodate

Two of twelve tribes